

## Faith and Inspiration

### Union of Church and Pastor

An update from Homestead Mennonite Church. For those of you who have been keeping up with HMC, you may have seen me mention on occasion that we've been in the midst of a pastoral search for the past year and a half.

Our previous pastor resigned in the middle of 2020, so HMC has had to adapt to life without a pastor, not to mention the pandemic requiring its own shifts. It was a trying time for us.

On the whole, however, we've come through it with strength, thank you, Lord. Members of our Council and Elders picked up the bulk of responsibility released by Pastor Rick.

People stepped forward to make sure the worship service could maintain a consistency of quality even through virtual or hybrid services.

A pastoral search committee formed to conduct the arduous process of finding, meeting, interviewing, and recommending pastoral candidates. This task in particular takes time with little visible progress for those on the outside, wondering when and if we will ever see results.

As of last Sunday, however, their work has borne fruit: HMC has found a pastor who seems a good fit for us, and we've called on him and his family to join us in

ministry. They accepted.

So here we are. After sixteen-ish months of adapting to and existing as a congregation without a pastor, we must prepare to adapt once again. Will you mind my saying I'm terrified?

My mother used an analogy of marriage to describe the congregation joining to a pastor, and I agree that it's an apt comparison.

At least in classic American tradition, marriage is a relatively early step in a relationship: After two parties decide that they are compatible and committed, they join together; but truly, there's so much they don't



**Luke Marshburn**  
Homestead Mennonite Church



know about each other. Have they ever lived together? Do they know about the snoring? Does one leave the toilet seat up, the other keep their dirty socks in a pile beside the closet? The little quirks that seem cute in the infatuation period may become irritants for the long haul.

Change can be scary. On a personal level, I understand the gravity of the commitment I will

make, assuming the union occurs. My role in the congregation is to be a pillar, and while a new pastor may lighten some loads, he may increase others.

What levels of accounting will I need to learn to hire and support a new pastor?

Health insurance, retirement plans, educational resources—or will he take care of it?

Will the new family rely on me emotionally or be more distant? Will we debate theology or argue it? So many unknowns.

It's even worse for the new pastor. He's joining not only me, but a whole congregation, a whole community. Moving to a new location; taking up a new position; building up new relationships; adapting to different methods of conduct; asserting his own preferences. So much change may certainly be a crushing stressor.

In spite of fear's weight, I am certain of one thing: We are not alone. We do not work without support. This congregation is grounded in love, and our conduct reflects it. We work for each other, not against, and whatever stress such a change will bring, the Lord is with us and guides us. We will stand with him.

As for you, the community at large! Homestead Mennonite Church and our potential pastor know that we do not exist separate from you. This endeavor will impact you as well. I ask for your prayer and support as we embark on this union. Growing pains may be difficult for us all, but with God's help, we will come through, possibly stronger than ever and fit to serve him. Thank you, Lord.

## Local Doctors Warning Families about the 12 Cruds of Christmas

As the holiday season hits full stride, local doctors want families to stay alert of the contagious illnesses that can spread as we all pack together to shop, travel on planes and trains or simply enjoy festive food and cheer together at parties.

Even before COVID became the most anticipated holiday threat, tens of millions of people were ill with bugs and viruses that are common around the holidays. In the 2019-2020 winter season alone, the CDC estimates that there were as many as 56 MILLION cases of the flu.

This is why medical providers with American Family Care (AFC), a national healthcare network with a local clinic, are reminding families not only to watch out for Delta and Omicron COVID germs this holiday season, but keep in mind the OTHER cruds that can make you very sick this time of year!

### THE 12 CRUDS OF CHRISTMAS

1. COVID – Needing no introduction, COVID-19 is still a threat this winter with the combination of existing and emerging variants and its ease of transmission.
2. Common Cold – Nasal congestion, sore throat, coughing and headaches are common symptoms of the various mild viruses that are common in winter months.
3. Flu – Different from a cold, the flu is a contagious respiratory illness that can affect the nose, throat, and sometimes the lungs, causing fever and fatigue.
4. Pneumonia – an infection of the lungs that can cause mild to severe illness, often the result of viral or bacterial infections.
5. RSV – Respiratory Syncytial Virus is a respiratory infection common in children and babies, which can cause fever, coughing, wheezing and lead to more serious infections.
6. Bronchiolitis – A common lung infection in young children and infants which is most prevalent during

the winter months.

7. Croup – Another respiratory infection but one more concentrated in the upper airways, blocking breathing and swelling the voice box and windpipe.

8. Strep Throat – A bacterial infection that can cause sore and scratchy throat but can also lead to more serious fever and other symptoms.

9. Mononucleosis – Sometimes called the “Kissing Disease”, mono is a viral infection spread by saliva, causing sore throat, fever, and other symptoms.

10. Norovirus – A contagious stomach bug that often leads to vomiting or diarrhea, and what is referred to as a stomach flu.

11. Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease – A common but often mild viral infection in young children, resulting in mouth sores and blisters.

12. Christmas Tree Syndrome – This is real. When trees are placed inside warm homes, sometimes a mold can grow and trigger allergic reactions.

AFC providers are also urging families to play it safe while out and about shopping, traveling and visiting relatives.

- Keep sanitizer handy or wash hands frequently.
- While shopping or traveling, use a knuckle to punch buttons on a debit/credit card key pad. This way if you rub your eye or mouth with your fingertip, you are not transferring germs.
- When showing new family photos off at parties and gatherings, wipe off your smartphone screen as you pass it around.
- Put down the vape pen! Hundreds of respiratory illnesses are related to vaping every year. Research even shows puffing on an e-cig disrupts your normal immune response to viral infections, like flu.
- Get vaccinations and boosters for COVID and/or flu. Vaccines prevent death from either of these highly contagious viruses.



## COVID-19 Hospitalizations Up Slightly

NSF - The numbers of Florida hospital inpatients and intensive-care unit patients with COVID-19 increased slightly in data released Tuesday by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The data showed that 1,411 inpatients had COVID-19, up from 1,403 on Monday and up from 1,359 on Dec. 7. Meanwhile, the data Tuesday showed that 278 COVID-19 patients were in intensive-care units, an increase from 266 on Monday.

Hospitalizations surged during the summer because of the highly contagious delta variant of the coronavirus but steadily declined in September, October and November.

## Rising Crude Oil Prices Cut ‘Discount’ for Motorists

NSF - With crude oil prices rising again, motorists won't get as big of a break at the pump as had been expected. Crude oil prices plunged recently amid concerns about how the omicron variant could affect global fuel demand. That had been expected to decrease gas prices by 20 to 30 cents a gallon around the Christmas holiday. But the AAA auto club said Monday that the omicron-related concerns have seemed to ease, causing oil prices to go up about 10 percent in the past week. The estimate of lower gas prices is now 10 to 20 cents. The average price of regular unleaded fuel in Florida was \$3.26 a gallon on Sunday.

## OBITUARY

### Onelia Dube

Onelia Dube was a caring wife, mother, grandmother, sister, and friend. She left this world on December 8th, 2021, at age 93.

She was born to Narciso Camacho and Adoración De La Cruz on May 16th, 1928, in Santa Clara, Cuba along with her siblings Crispina, Felix, Ramon, and Narciso JR.

She met her husband, Leo Dube while he was stationed on the island serving the U.S. Navy. They later married in 1950 and moved to the United States. Onelia served her country as a military wife and together, they had two children: Leo JR. and Albert.

Onelia loved spending time with her family and often could be found spending hours on the phone chatting with her niece Gladys. She was a skilled seamstress who



loved to sew and would take joy in crocheting hats for newborn babies at Homestead Hospital. Onelia was a lively spirit who touched so many hearts and will be dearly missed.

A short graveside service was held on December 8th at Caballero Rivero Palms Woodlawn Funeral Home. In lieu of flowers, please donate to the ALF that cared for her on her behalf; Diaz Home Care ALF, Jorge Gongar 786-286-2826 or 786-715-5627.

### Billy Lee Graves

Billy Lee Graves, 61, of Homestead Florida suffered an accidental asphyxiation on December 4th to which he never regained consciousness. On Thursday, December 9th, he was removed from life support and peacefully passed away very shortly thereafter.

Billy was born in Vicenza, Italy to Jerry William and Maria Luisa Graves. His father served three tours in the Vietnam and Korean wars and later retired after 20 years of service to our country. As a son of a military father, Billy and his family were transferred to many military bases where he always had to make new friends. He even had to learn English as a young child as he was born across.

Billy finally settled in Homestead Florida where he met his wife, Lynda, who was an avid equestrian and barrel racer at the time. She tested his commitment to her and potential for any future together by having him muck and clean out her horses stalls which he did without hesitation and little complaint.

Billy's military upbringing taught him exceptional work ethics and love of our country. He worked for Miami-Dade County Water and Sewer Authority for 35 years and would never ask any of his crew to do anything he wouldn't or hadn't done himself. He was also the person that lowered the American flag to half staff to honor any fallen American or



event. He was scheduled to retire July 31, 2022, which unfortunately will never come into fruition here. However, as he was a Christian and had firm faith, he is with our Heavenly Father now which is the ultimate retirement of all.

Billy was mostly known for his "larger than life" personality, practical jokes, demented sense of humor and has always made himself available to anyone who was in need, no matter how big or small. One of our neighbors said he was the icon of the neighborhood.

He is survived by his wife Lynda of 37 years, son's Travis and Zac, brother's Glen, Michael, Brendan, Jason, Sister Magda, step-mother Joanne whom he always thought of and called his mom, Grace Wilsey-Owens and 3 grand-daughters.

Memorial services will be held Friday, December 17, 2021 from 12 pm to 6 pm at Branam Funeral Home, 809 N. Krome Ave, Homestead. To all who knew Billy, including county employees, there will be a Celebration of Life at their home Friday, December 17 at 7 pm.

To submit an obituary or death notice, email wording and jpg photo to [info@newsleadermail.com](mailto:info@newsleadermail.com), 305-245-2311  
Print deadline is Wednesday at noon.

## Temple Hatikvah

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